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A review of language teacher selection examination and recruitment in Turkey and Poland

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of language teacher selection examination and recruitment in Turkey and Poland, together with the national assessments conducted to assess candidates entering the teaching profession such as Praxis I and II and the Teaching Knowledge Test. It further discusses KPSS (Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) conducted and used as the selection process for teaching positions in the state schools in Turkey and compares it with the examinations discussed above, with a focus on the alternative model of teacher certification and recruitment with reference to Poland's portfolio assessment and teacher development scheme.

Keywords: language teacher; recruitment; selection; Turkey; Poland

A review of language teacher selection examination and recruitment in Turkey and Poland

1. Introduction

When we think about the effectiveness and efficiency of any educational system, we may suggest quite a few diverse factors shaping the quality of education. However, many will agree that the efficiency of any educational system mainly relies on how well teachers are educated and recruited (Johnstone, 2004; OECD, 2005). Any problems appearing in teacher education and recruitment will undoubtedly decrease the quality of the educational system and result in failure to create effective teaching and learning environments expected (OECD, 2009). According to Mitchell and Barth (1999), the most harm will be done to the students by teachers who are poorly trained and tested. Therefore, special care should be given to increasing the quality of teachers, which, in turn, leads to improvement in the system of education.

In order to enhance the quality of an education system, teachers should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in order to achieve effective teaching and learning which results in student success. According to Andrew, Cobb, and Giampietro (2005):

Good teaching is a complex interaction of a wide range of teacher characteristics, abilities, dispositions, knowledge of subject fields, experience, and pedagogical knowledge (p. 353).

Regarding the qualities, Darling-Hammond (2008, p.20) has found the following qualities important:

- > knowledge and skills that are associated with desired student outcomes and achievement,
- teachers' performance on teaching assessments measuring students known to be associated with student learning,
- contributions to growth in student learning.

Putting all the qualities stated by the above authors and as stressed by Stronge (2007), it can be put forward that verbal ability, knowledge of teaching and learning, content knowledge and affective aspect of human behavior are most likely to be found among the most important prerequisites to make learning and teaching effective and achieve student success. The relationship between these qualities can be shown in the following figure (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Emergent view-Language knowledge for/in teaching taken from Freeman, Orzulak, and Morissey (2009, p.86)

In order to ensure that prospective teachers acquire these qualities, teacher assessment is required, which is a part of a broader concept of quality management in education. Traditionally, as is noted by White (1998), the preoccupation with quality in English language teacher education has been associated too much with bureaucracy characterized by specialization, a hierarchy of authority, a system of rules and impersonality. According to White (1998), there are three approaches to quality in education. The first one, quality assurance, is

experts-driven and places emphasis on accountability and easily identifiable and testable goals of education. White (1998) adds that

Quality assurance is characterized by standards which are set externally by experts, and presented as a set of codified requirements or expectations, evaluated by some objective criteria, usually involving some form of inspection, formal evaluation, or examination (p. 135).

This is also the approach represented in major teaching certification frameworks described below. The second approach to quality is through contract performance, which is provider-driven. Here, the contract is negotiated by those who will undertake tasks associated with that contract, before conformance assessment begins. Thus, assessment is done on a continuing basis by the parties concerned. The third approach is customer-driven quality which is client or customer-led, with students having the greatest say in teacher assessment.

The issue of teaching quality evaluation has not been widely discussed so far; however, some interesting themes for investigation have already been raised. Leshem and Bar-Hama (2008) wonder whether the quality of teaching should be assessed by observable behavior and measurable components, as well as whether it is the practicum that should be taken into consideration, or whether teachers should be assessed on their formal knowledge. If it is practical teachers' experience to be assessed during the practicum, the lesson can lesson can be assessed analytically using discrete criteria, or, perhaps, it constitutes an entity, which cannot be broken into smaller components and should be assessed impressionistically (Leshem & Bar-Hama, ibid).

Once the decision on which areas of teachers' knowledge and/or performance are to be assessed has been taken, the question arises on the forms of assessment: traditional (standardized, close-ended tests) or alternative (reflective journals, portfolios, observation lessons, self-assessments, peer assessment, cooperating teacher assessment, and pedagogical counselor assessment (Leshem & Bar-Hama, ibid.). The design of the teacher assessment system would finally require deciding when and how often teachers are to be assessed – only when entering the teaching profession, or, on the contrary, at regular intervals after a certain period of teaching.

2. Language teacher qualification examinations

As in the other subjects, the demand to check and ensure that language teachers have the necessary skills and prerequisites in accordance with the language policy has strengthened the need to develop standards and requirements. This need has appeared in the form of national assessments to be used as a gate-keeper to the teaching profession such as Praxis I and II (ETS 2008; Bobrow 2010), the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT-teaching English to speakers of other languages) (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2008), CELTA (Thaine, 2004), DELTA, CertTESOL, and DipTESOL.

Praxis I is used in some parts of the states in the USA as an admission requirement for a college of education, focusing on the Academic Skills assessment measures of Reading, Writing, and Mathematical Skills. Praxis II is used to provide licensing (Barduhn & Johnson, 2009) to teach a specific age group, measuring the principles of learning and teaching knowledge for Grades K–6, Grades 5–9, and Grades 7–12 together with the subject knowledge. On Praxis Tests, questions are mostly in the forms of multiple-choice and short answers except the writing section.

On the other hand, TKT (http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/tkt.html), a test on teaching English to speakers of other languages) aims to tap into teachers' awareness of different methodologies for teaching, the meta-language of teaching, ways in which resources can be used, the key aspects of lesson planning and classroom management to reflect different needs. The three separate modules of TKT (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, 2008), namely "Language and background to language learning and teaching", "Planning lessons and use of resources for language teaching" and "Managing the teaching and learning process", can be taken either together or separately. Each test consists of a set of 80 close-ended questions (multiple-choice,

multiple matching, etc.) to be done within 80 minutes. Both the TKT and the Praxis series do not have a component to test oral production, which can be considered as one of the most important skills that a language teacher is expected to have.

CELTA and DELTA are examinations offered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, recognized worldwide as qualifying for English as a Foreign Language instruction. In the two-step Certificate **English** Language Teaching system, in Adults (CELTA) (http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/celta.html) is an initial qualification for entrants with little or no previous teaching experience. The major areas catered for in CELTA preparation courses mainly focus on language skills, context, planning, and resources for different contexts (Thaine, 2004).

As compared to Praxis or TKT, during the CELTA preparation course, a trainee's actual teaching performance is assessed without an additional final examination. The teaching practice (a total of six hours with classes at two levels of ability) and written assignments (one focusing on adult learning; one on the language system of English; one on language skills; and one on classroom teaching) are taken into consideration. Thus, trainee assessment is continuous and takes place throughout the course and integrated with both assessed components contributing to the overall grade.

DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults), known from September 2008 as DELTA Modules (http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/teaching-awards/delta-modular.html), is often regarded as a follow-up qualification to CELTA, to be applied for and gained after a certain number of years of professional practice. The diploma is available in many different countries throughout the world, and candidates enroll in preparation courses. DELTA Modules is more flexible than other qualifications, as it can be taken part-time over a year ,or more, or full-time over a period of two to three months, is available also through blended learning delivery, and it can focus on specialist teaching (e.g., teaching young learners or business English). The modules encompass understanding language, methodology, and resources for teaching (Module One), developing professional practice (Module Two), and extending practice and English language teaching specialism (Module Three). The course reconciles theory and practice of English Language teaching examining in depth the principles of effective teaching and the practical skills required for teaching English to adult learners. Assessment and certification is done based on the coursework assignments (six assessed internally, one assessed externally), extended assignment (a case study of a learner, supervised by the center and assessed externally) and written examination (set and assessed externally). Additionally, candidates are required to serve 10 hours' directed observation of lessons (five being live lessons taught by experienced teachers) and 10 hours' teaching practice (four hours being supervised and assessed internally, and one assessed externally). However, Modules One and Three can be taken without enrolling in a preparation course.

The final two-step English language teacher qualification system to be described in the present paper is the accreditation scheme endorsed by The Trinity College London (http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk). The lower-level certificate, Trinity CertTESOL (http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk/site/?id=201) is designed for candidates with little or no experience of teaching English, equipping them with the basic skills and knowledge necessary for first teaching posts. CertTESOL is one of only two TEFL qualifications listed by the British Council as an acceptable introductory teaching qualification that meets their standards and requirements. The course makes an introduction to the theory and practice of contemporary English teaching and gives an insight into the challenges facing the learner and the role of the teacher. It encompasses four hours' observation of experienced teachers, lesson plan practice with self- and tutor-evaluation and feedback, teaching practice, needs analysis for a learner, spoken and written language practice, and experience of learning an unknown language. Candidate assessment is done throughout the course, and is based on four/five written assignments, a test of grammar and/or phonology, and a positively assessed teaching practice of minimum six hours.

The higher-level teaching qualification, DipTESOL (http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk/site/?id=202), is directed at experienced EFL/ESOL teachers with minimum two years' teaching experience. The four units of the

course allow candidates to focus on specific aspects of English language teaching, such as English for Special Purposes (ESP), English for young learners, Business English, ICT in the classroom, lifelong learning, or bilingual learning. DipTESOL courses are designed around four units:

- language, teaching, and learning;
- the teacher as a developmental, reflective practitioner;
- phonological theory in classroom practice;
- teaching, preparation, delivery, and self-evaluation.

Each unit is subdivided into three sections, with tasks ranging from essays, through talks and discussions to independent research projects and externally assessed teaching journals. Candidates have three years in which to complete their assessments in all the four units, and they will only be awarded DipTESOL once they have completed a validated course and passed all the unit assessments.

3. KPSS (Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) in Turkey

Similar to the purpose of the examinations discussed above, a competitive central exam, KPSS (The Selection Examination for Professional Posts in Public Organizations) is used as the selection process for teaching positions in the state schools. However, the private sector has its own approach such as conducting formal, standardized interviews, testing basic and subject matter skills, and observing actual teaching performance during a demonstration-teaching lesson. KPSS evolved from a problematic relationship between teacher supply and demand. That is, in some teaching subjects, there are more applicants than vacancies, and most of the teachers are 'vagabond' or 'displaced' teachers with no jobs (Su, 2012).

KPSS is similar to Praxis I, but regarding Praxis II, TKT and other preparation courses such as CELTA, there are major differences. First of all, until recently, there was no subject knowledge test; that is, although there were different subject areas that a candidate can teach, such as Mathematics, English, and Biology, all the candidates were required to answer the same questions (Table 1).

Table 1The sections and the number of questions in KPSS (taken from Kılıçkaya & Krajka, 2010, p. 255)

Section	Number of Questions	Overall Weight	Time (minutes)
The morning session			120
General knowledge and ability	60	30%	
General Culture	60	30%	
The afternoon session			150
Educational Sciences	120	40%	
TOTAL	240	100%	270

According to the recent press announcement issued by OSYM (2012), this has been changed upon the request of Ministry of Education (MEB, in Turkish), and in cooperation with MEB, Assessment, Selection, and Placement Center (OSYM, in Turkish) and State Personnel Presidency (DPB), it has been decided that Teacher subject knowledge test is to be integrated into KPSS for teachers of the following areas starting from July 2013: Turkish, Mathematics (Primary School), Natural and Applied Sciences/Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Turkish Language and Literature, History, Geography, Mathematics (High School), Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Religion-Culture and Ethics Education, and Foreign Language (German, French, English) (Table 2). It is noteworthy that although subject knowledge test will be integrated into the future tests, no subject knowledge test is required from teacher candidates of such subject areas as Guidance and Counseling and Pre-school teaching, and there is not any reason stated by the officials on this issue.

The section of KPSS on educational sciences includes questions similar to Praxis II, Principles of Learning,

and Teaching. However, there are not any different sections or questions for candidates who will be teaching a specific age group, which means that any candidate who will be teaching Grades 1-8 or Grades 9–12 will respond to the same questions. The exam is used to assign teachers to public schools in need, while it is not used as a way of licensing to teach. Private institutions or schools do not require KPSS exam. Instead, they have their own way of selecting and recruiting teachers.

Table 2 *The sections and the number of questions in KPSS to be conducted in July 2013*

Section	Number of Questions	Overall Weight	Time (minutes)
The morning session			120
General knowledge and ability	60	15%	
General Culture	60	15%	
The afternoon session			150
Educational Sciences	120	20%	
Subject knowledge test	50	50%	To be announced (might be around
TOTAL	290	100%	50 minutes) 270 +Subject area

The issue with *KPSS* lies in the reason(s) why an exam is required to recruit language as well as other subjects' teachers. As indicated by Mitchell et al. (2001), the main aim of a teacher recruitment system or exam is to select the teachers who are skilled and competent in their teaching subject and offer the job to whoever meets the minimum requirements or beyond. Otherwise, if the exam just functions as a gatekeeper and used to distinguish teachers who have the highest score since there are more applicants in any specific subject matter; we have to question its validity. As mentioned earlier in subject areas where there are fewer applicants, the score is not taken into consideration as in KPSS and any applicant with a score of at least as 17 can be offered the job, ignoring that "... individual quality may be more important than certification type" (Stronge, 2007, p. 8) and the exam conducted nationwide.

4. The procedure of teacher recruitment in Turkey

Turkish teacher trainees of English candidates enroll in a four-year program (sometimes five-year depending on the language proficiency requirements of the department) at the department of foreign language education in faculties of education following the exam conducted nationwide to select candidates. The programs followed at the departments, though there might be some differences in terms of the courses offered as elective or must, are accredited by YOK (Higher Education Council). During their education, teacher trainees follow the curricula as specified by YOK (1998), though not strictly, including courses on foreign language teaching methodology, pedagogy and other related courses such as use of ICT in language teaching and free electives.

Graduates are entitled to enter the profession at private schools through exams and interviews held by these schools and the public schools through KPSS. However, as for public schools, teacher candidates do not have to prove language proficiency in English using any language proficiency test, nor do they have to take any language test while taking KPSS. In other words, their subject knowledge test is in no way assessed. All the teachers willing to work in public schools have to take KPSS, the central exam for positions in the state, and respond to the same questions regardless of their field of study. Based on the scores, quota for each field and their choices regarding the school that they would like to be employed, teachers are selected and assigned to primary or secondary schools. The authorities in the government guide and finalize the recruitment procedure, which means that the local school lacks the authority in participation in the teacher recruitment process. Only in private schools, school administrators have the authority to select and recruit teachers using more comprehensive tools, focusing on the school objectives (Başar & Akyol, 2009), and candidates' profiles, which results in creating a positive atmosphere.

In the past, teacher recruitment occurred at different times in a year, generally following the end of the school year (August), before the beginning of the new school year (September) or sometimes during the semester when there is an urgent need for teachers. However, lately it has been decided that teachers will be recruited once a year, following the end of the school year.

In the teacher recruitment process, graduates and senior students with the qualifications to teach apply to ÖSYM to take the exam generally conducted towards the end of June each year. In the meantime, schools report the vacancies to the Ministry of Education, the number of positions available considering the required teaching hours. Then, the Ministry announces the number of positions for each teaching position and the minimum scores to be appointed as a teacher for each teaching subject. These scores change from one teaching subject to another as in some subjects, there are more teachers available than needed. It is not rare that a candidate who has scored over 99 out of 100 in the exam is not recruited simply because there is no position available that year due to the huge number of teachers in the schools available, while another candidate can be recruited with a score of 17 as there is a lack of supply in that subject matter. Once the results are announced, the Ministry of Education accepts candidates' application for the positions through the Internet, including their choice of cities and schools where they would like to work. Then, the applicants are ranked according to the results. Based on the rankings and the applicants' preferences, they are appointed to the schools. If a candidate declines the appointment or does not start work in the required time, s/he cannot apply for another teaching position in public schools for a year. For the positions left unfilled after the recruitment process, a new recruitment process can start, or until the position is filled, schools often assign teachers or persons mostly outside of the field in which they have been trained. According to the recently published audit report (MEB, 2010), the current number of teachers in public schools is 584,507; however, the education system needs 133,317 teachers more, taking the required teaching hours into consideration (15 hours a week for a month salary and 6 hours of extra teaching).

During the whole process, the local school administration does not have any voice and only deals with the formal procedure of appointment, which can be considered as paper work unlike the new recruitment system in Germany (Schaefers & Terhart, 2006) and the successful recruitment system in which necessary components are clearly defined such as good curriculum, parental involvement and necessary funding (Peterson, 2002). The aim of the centralized recruitment and placement policy seems to ensure that all schools and regions are provided with the opportunity to have qualified teachers. However, to some less attractive regions and schools, especially in the Eastern part of the country, teachers with lower exam results can be appointed. In this case, if we assume that higher exam scores in this exam mean higher levels of qualifications and teaching practices, some 'low quality' teachers will be appointed to schools where students will be at a disadvantage. It appears that there is not any regulation or willingness to attract and keep the teachers to these zones as indicated by Mulvey and Cooper (2009). As such, the teachers assigned to the eastern part are very eager to leave soon after completing the minimum years of teaching in the newly assigned school - generally 2 or 4 years excluding some urgent situations like marriage or health problems. Although in other countries such as France and Britain, teachers depending on where they work are entitled to receive some allowances such as child support and transportation cost (Grenfell, Kelly, & Jones, 2003), the teachers in Turkey do not enjoy the same allowances no matter where they work or what kind of qualifications or training they possess such as a Master's degree or Ph.D. (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008).

5. Poland's portfolio assessment and teacher professional development scheme

The model of language teacher qualification and recruitment based on portfolio assessment and exemplified in Poland can be reflected upon as opposite to the one represented in Turkey's KPSS. Rather than taking an externally administered examination proving the qualifications for English language teaching (as is the case with, for instance, CELTA or DipTESOL), Polish candidates get their qualifications by completing officially accredited teacher training courses run by the higher education institutions approved by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The teacher qualification courses can be incorporated in the B.A. or M.A. in English language programmes, or alternatively, offered as a stand-alone postgraduate course. In the latter case, apart

from the postgraduate qualification course diploma, the candidate needs to prove language proficiency in English using one of the officially approved certificates (e.g., University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate's Certificate in Advanced English or Certificate of Proficiency in English).

The teacher qualification courses can be composed individually by English language departments of universities provided they meet the general guidelines set by the Decree of the Minister of National Education on teacher qualification standards:

- ➤ a total of not less than 330 hours spread over 3 semesters;
- available only for B.A. or M.A. diploma holders;
- providing at least 60 hours of psychology, at least 60 hours of pedagogy, at least 120 hours of foreign language methodology, 30 hours of voice emission and 30 hours of ICT;
- encompassing 150 hours of teaching practice.

Successful completion of the above, certified by a separate diploma or a part of the B.A. /M.A. in English diploma, gives teachers full qualifications to teach English in all kinds of schools in Poland. The recruitment process is local; the candidate teachers apply to individual schools, whose principals are in full charge of the recruitment process. However, once entering the profession, language teachers in Poland enter the obligatory teacher development scheme, which guarantees periodic assessment when applying for a higher teacher development rank. As specified in the Decree of the Minister of National Education on teacher professional development, teachers at the four different levels have a fixed amount of time (ranging from 1 year at the lowest level to 3 years at the next two levels) to meet the requirements. This encompasses, among others, observing and discussing other teachers' lessons, discussing one's own lessons observed by a school mentor, participating in in-school development programmes, acquiring wide knowledge of the legal regulations of the teaching profession, using ICT in teaching, demonstrating the implementation of current findings from the areas of psychology, pedagogy and methodology, to mention only some. The accomplishment of requirements is to be recorded with official certificates, lesson observation protocols, lesson scenarios, authored curricula, case studies, publications, and the like.

Once the period set for getting a particular development rank has expired, the teacher files the application together with the set of documents certifying fulfillment of requirements. The board of experts reviews the documents and examines the candidate teacher, enquiring about the contents of the person's own accomplishments as well as the general issues connected with psychology, pedagogy, methodology, legal framework of the teaching profession, juvenile treatment and the like.

Teacher recruitment process in Turkey, compared to that in Poland, is conducted in various different ways. The main differences between these two countries are KPSS, the nationwide exam conducted in Turkey and the local recruitment process in Poland. However, when what KPSS covers and what teacher candidates are expected to perform are concerned, especially language teachers in Turkey seem to have at disadvantage in that the exam does not differentiate those who have high levels of proficiency in English from those who do not. In other words, candidates' knowledge of English is in no way taken into account. As regards the recruitment process, as indicated earlier, a language teacher candidate's overall score on KPSS is what counts in the recruitment process in Turkey. Unlike Poland, local recruitment in public schools is not conducted in Turkey, which means that the administration, teachers, or parent are not involved in the process.

6. Suggestions

Following all the reviews of teacher recruitment processes in Turkey and Poland and some nationwide exams conducted, the following suggestions can be put forward to improve teacher recruitment process in both countries.

It is natural that an exam is conducted when there are more applicants than vacancies in any profession. However, these exams should test what teacher candidates are expected to perform in class. In other words, we cannot talk about the reliability or validity of these tests such as KPSS in Turkey, which do not test candidates' subject knowledge. It is the quality that counts in terms of learning and teaching (Dladla & Moon, 2013).

In Poland, there is not a nationwide examination, which might pose a threat to teacher recruitment. Although Polish candidates get their qualifications by completing officially accredited teacher training courses, since recruitment process is local, it should be ensured that the recruitment process should be based on objective criteria. As for Turkey, local recruitment can lead to some issues such as objectivity in the process.

The very first step that any government committed to increasing the quality of education in their country should take is to improve and develop the teacher selection and recruitment process (Thaman, 2007). In this way, students can be encouraged to opt for teaching profession (Cockburn & Haydn, 2004). As stated by Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012) and Baines (2010), teaching comes after medicine in such countries as Finland. Teaching should be an attractive profession as in Finland through improving several factors such as working conditions and pay/benefits (Erkaya, 2013).

7. Conclusion

The aim of the current paper is to provide a review of language teacher selection examination as well as recruitment process in Turkey and Poland, touching upon several issues such as the exams conducted nationwide geared towards to assess and select teacher candidates. This review reveals that there are various differences in both countries in terms of assessment and recruitment process. All the reviews and discussions of the teacher certification and recruitment in this paper indicate that the subject in which prospective teachers are being specialized has been given special importance during the training, assessment and recruitment process. However, KPSS, although the subject specific competencies have been determined by the Ministry of Education in Turkey, lacks the assessment of these competencies and more importantly the subject in which language teachers have specialized, which might affect how and what they teach as stated by Johnson (2009, p. 87)

High-stakes language testing, particularly when initiated at the state or national level, represents a powerful macro-structure that has a tremendous impact on what L2 teachers teach, how they teach, and what their L2 students ultimately learn.

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